

HEALTH REFORM 2009

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN MAX BAUCUS (D-MONT.)

It is the duty of the next President and the next Congress to reform America's health care system. In 2009, Congress must take up and act on meaningful health reform legislation that achieves universal coverage while also addressing the underlying problems in our health system. The urgency of this task has become undeniable.

In preparing to act, I led the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance in holding nine hearings on health care reform this year, and hosted a day-long health summit in June 2008 to explore in greater depth the problems plaguing our health system. Additionally, I have spent a good deal of time talking to colleagues on both sides of the aisle and to stakeholders in the health care industry to get better perspectives on the issues that matter.

This paper...represents the next step. It is not intended to be a legislative proposal. Rather, it details my vision for both policy and the process in the upcoming health care reform debate. The plan contained outlined here addresses health care coverage, quality, and cost. Many components will require an initial investment but, over time, will vastly improve the quality of the health care Americans receive and reduce the cost of that health care, ultimately putting our system on a more sustainable path. It is my intention that after ten years the U.S. will spend no more on health care than is currently projected, but we will spend those resources more efficiently, and will provide better-quality coverage to all Americans.

The health system is so complex that any solution will demand time and attention to make sure we get it right. This plan is most certainly a work in progress. But the intention...is to encourage constructive input by policymakers, stakeholders, and health policy thought leaders to move us forward. I look forward to discussing this plan with President-Elect Obama, with my colleagues in Congress, and with stakeholders in the health care system, working collaboratively with all to enact an effective health reform law.

Americans who care deeply about the future of our health system and our economy must all take up the fight together for comprehensive health care reform. My door will be open throughout the debate, and I will seek partners with "can do" spirits and open minds. I believe — very strongly — that every American has a right to high-quality health care through affordable, portable, meaningful health coverage. And I believe that Americans cannot wait any longer.



Max Baucus
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance